Synopsis of Proposed Research Work (Research outline)

on

Dimensions of Brand Image: An Exploratory Study

Department of Management Studies

Submitted by :
Jagdish Bhagwat
Candidate
MBA, BE

This proposal is prepared under the Supervision and guidance of **Dr. Upinder Dhar**, Vice Chancellor, JK Lakshmipat University, Jaipur, who is a recognized research supervisor of Symbiosis International (Deemed University)

Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

Title

Dimensions of Brand Image: An Exploratory Study

Introduction

A brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition."[1]

Brand image in encyclopedia.farlex.com[2] is defined as mental perception of a brand in the minds of consumers. This perception is developed using communications and a consumer's experience of the brand. Brand image includes the 'human' characteristics of brand personality, such as 'warm', 'friendly', 'fun', and 'strong'. The concept of brand identity is closely aligned to that of brand positioning. The latter tends to suggest action on the part of the company to assign the brand with particular attributes, whereas brand image is more concerned with consumer perception.

The description of brand image in www.brand-image.com[3] is "Brand image offers holistic services designed to deliver rich emotional brand experiences for consumers, from brand strategy and consumer insight, to brand identity, industrial design, package design, graphics, innovation, interactive, retail experience and architecture in one integrated offering." Brand image is "the identity of goods or services as perceived by consumers"[4]. A brand may have multiple images of varying importance.

Brief literature review and noteworthy contributions in the field of proposed work

Significant contribution was made by Mr. Keller Kevin [1], Ms Aaker Jenifer[5], Mr. Batra Rajeev and Ms. Homer Pamela [6] in the field of brand personality, brand identity and brand image. Keller Kevin Lane[1] defined brand imagery as the way in which the brand attempts to meet customer's psychological or

social needs. Brand imagery is how people think about a brand abstractly, rather than what they think the brand actually does for them. Thus, imagery refers to more intangible aspects of the brand. Imagery associations can be formed directly from consumer's own experience and contact with the product, brand, target market & usage situation, or indirectly through the deception of these considerations as communicated in brand advertising, or by some other source of information, such as word of mouth. Four major categories can be highlighted in creating brand image: (i) User Profile; (ii) Purchase & usage situation; (iii) Personality and values; and (iv) History, heritage and experiences.

One set of brand image association is created by the type of person or organization who uses the brand. Customers form a mental image of actual users or aspired idealized users. Demographic and psychographic factors are often associated with image. The demographic factors can be gender, age, race and income. The psychographic factors can be attitude towards life, career, possessions, social issues, or political institutions.

Brand may also take on personality traits and can be characterized as – modern, old fashioned, lively, exotic etc. Brand personality is often related to the descriptive usage imagery. Brand personality is also important in creating brand image. Aaker Jenifer[5] identified 15 facets of brand personality that encompassed 42 items. They were then grouped into five dimensions: Sincerity (down to earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful), Excitement (Daring, spirited, imaginative, and up to date), Competence (Reliable, intelligent, successful), Sophistication (upper class, charming) and Ruggedness (outdoorsy, tough). These dimensions also contribute to brand image.

Batra Rajeev and Homer Pamela [6] studied the situational influences on the formation of brand image and personality beliefs. They noted that non-verbalized personality association of celebrity endorsers do indeed reinforce equivalent consumer beliefs about a brand's fun and classiness benefits, but only if a social consumption context is evoked and if the brand image beliefs are appropriate to the consumer schema for the product category involved.

Ogba IE and Tan Zhenzhen[7] in their research paper quoted that there is a growing recognition of the relevance of brand image to the success of market offering and organization. Indications suggest that a good brand image can enhance customer experience and satisfaction for long-term commitment. The outcome of this study concluded that brand image can positively influence customers' loyalty to a market offering and possibly boost customer commitment. The study identifies the degree of the relevance of brand image and its impact on organizations and their market offerings. The study also suggests that good brand image should positively impact the customers' loyalty, which on a long term also influenced customer perceived quality, enabled satisfaction and also influenced to a greater degree, the extent to which customers were willing to express commitment to such offering for sustainable profit.

Presar Steven [8] in his article “Creating a Positive Brand Image” quoted that successful branding of a service or product is a matter of creating an image that is Positive, Relevant, and Memorable. Organizations wanted to create an emotional association (such as happiness or fun) with the product. According to researchers, there were two basic ways that an organization can create these associations. The first way was through direct experience. A second approach to branding that can be used more easily in a web environment was to create indirect associations.

Punnathara C.J.[9] in his article brand image key to brands' growth mentioned the need of rebuilding brand images. He also quoted Technology and customer loyalty as two independent facets of the picture. These facets need to be consistently reinforced with the right image and brand.

An article on Brand Image in finance.mapsofworld.com/brand/image.html[10] quotes that brand image is the most significant aspect associated with a product and is the perception of the consumers about it. Examples were given in support. There are various factors which lead to building up of the identity of a brand in the market: advertisement, quality of product, after sales service, other associated service. Brand images are not built in a day. The products need some time to establish themselves in the market. Image of a single brand may vary among consumers but the most significant out of them

persist. Brand images are also liable to change with the change in brand strategy of the company. In the case of Mc Donald's, the initial brand image of a fast-food center was changed to a restaurant meant for the family, young and loners. Thus, the mindscape of the company has broadened in pursuit of attracting more segments of customers. Hence, brand image is one of the most important aspects associated with the product.

A study carried out by Prashant Mishra[11] entitled "Dimensions of Brand Personality : an Exploratory study" revealed many attributes of brand personality like purposefulness, energizing, deceptive, pleasing, pragmatic, enchanting etc. These attributes also form a sub-set of brand image. In yet another research "Dimensions of Brand Character : An Exploratory study" by Smriti Johari[12] it was revealed that many attributes of brand character like competent, philanthropic, earnest, perfect, courteous, amiable, etc., are a sub set of brand image.

Rationale and significance of the study

Brand image is an important phenomenon. It helps in building a positive association with the customers. It provides confidence to customers on quality and consistency of products. It helps organizations in developing a long term marketing strategy and a desirable positioning of products. A positive brand image results in repeat purchases and customer loyalty.

There is a wide gap in understanding the factors, attributes and variables responsible for building brand image in Indian context. A review of research studies has revealed that a few authors have made some passing remarks about the brand image. There is likely to be a change in the perception of brand image due to changes in economic scenario and socio-cultural status of customers. New perspectives are evolving and old concepts are losing relevance. The present study is purported to bridge the gaps and identify the dimensions constituting brand image.

Aims and objectives of the study

The aims and objectives of the study are as under:

1. To identify factors and dimensions of brand image in Indian context for durable and non-durable products.
2. To compare factors and dimensions of brand image of two product categories, durable and non durable products.
3. To develop a standardized psychometric tool (instrument) to measure brand image of durable and non-durable products.
4. To open new vistas of research.

Scope of the study

1. This study will help marketers in understanding customers' mind set and in building image of their brands. It will in turn help organizations in repositioning their brands according to the contemporary brand image in customers' mind.
2. This study will provide a base to organizations for planning their marketing strategies in today's dynamic scenario and will help them in making necessary modifications in marketing strategies.
3. This study will help the academicians in understanding the factors responsible in creating brand image and its dimensions separately for durable and non-durable products.
4. This study will precipitate thinking to explore new domains of research.

Bibliography

1. Keller, Kevin Lane (2008). *Strategic Brand Management – Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity*. Indian Edition. New Delhi : Pearson Education. pp 24, 87-88.

2. Encyclopedia.farlex.com/brand + image, (accessed on 15 March, 2010).

3. www.brand-image.com (accessed on 15 March, 2010).

4. *The American Heritage Dictionary of Business Terms* (2009). USA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

5. Aaker, Jennifer (1997). "Dimensions of brand personality". *Journal of Marketing Research*, *34(1997), 347-356.*

6 Batra, Rajeev and Homer, Pamela (2004). The Situational Impact of Brand Image Beliefs. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Vol. 14, No. 3 (2004), pp. 318-330*.

7. Ogba, Ike-Elechi and Tan, Zhenzhen (2009). Exploring the impact of brand image on customer loyalty and commitment in China. *Journal of Technology Management in China. Vol.4, No.2 (2009)pp 132-144*.

8. Presar, Steven. Creating a Positive Brand Image - *w*ww.addme.com/newsletters/issue189.htm - January 23rd, 2001 - Issue #189 (accessed on 15 March,2010)

9. Punnathara, C.J. Brand image key to banks' growth. www.thehindubusinessline.com /.../ 2005122602041200.htm (accessed on 15 March, 2010)

10. www.finance.mapsofworld.com/brand/image.html, Brand Image. (accessed on 15 March, 2010)

11. Mishra, Prashant (2002). *Dimensions of Brand Personality: An Exploratory Study*. Ph D thesis guided by Dr. U. Dhar – Director, Prestige Institute of Management & Research, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore.

12. Johari, Smriti (2005). *Dimensions of Brand Character: An Exploratory Study*. Ph D thesis guided by Dr. U. Dhar – Director Prestige Institute of Management & Research, Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore.

The candidate's work experience

Prof. Jagdish Bhagwat is an Engineering Graduate from Malaviya National Institute of Technology, Jaipur (earlier MREC, Jaipur). He was engaged in Production & Quality control departments in different steel plants in India & abroad and has more than 13 years industry experience.

He was selected as Associate Professor (Reader) in Pioneer Institute of Professional Studies; Indore affiliated to Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya (University of Indore), through a properly selected selection committee. For last eight years, he is teaching marketing management and operations management subjects in different business schools of Indore. He has conducted management development programs for many business organizations. The few prominent organizations are - Airtel, TATA International, Jet Airways, and HDFC bank etc.